



Seattle City Council  
Committee on the Built Environment (COBE)  
September 29, 2010

**South Downtown – Issues for COBE Consideration**

The Council Bill (C.B.) for the South Downtown project has not yet been introduced. Council staff have been working with Department of Planning and Development (DPD) staff and others to clarify language, address inconsistencies, and resolve a variety of small issues to get the bill in shape. All of these changes will be reflected in the C.B. before it is introduced.

Through this process, we have identified: (1) several more-substantive changes that Councilmember Clark has decided should be made *before* introduction; and (2) issues for consideration by COBE members that could result in amendments to the C.B. *after* introduction.

In addition, we have prepared: (3) a draft resolution that would be a companion to the C.B. and that would address key issues related to South Downtown that extend beyond land use regulations.

**1. Changes that will be reflected in the C.B. *before* it is introduced:**

- a. Do not upzone the WOSCA site west of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. and north of S. Royal Brougham Way.
- b. Amend regulations for development on the Qwest Stadium North Lot to allow the affordable housing to be built anywhere in South Downtown, rather than only within the North Lot development itself.
- c. Require a *green street setback* or *residential hillside terrace* that is built to earn extra floor area under incentive zoning to be open to the public 24/7 (instead of for a minimum of 10 hours per day).

**2. Outstanding issues for COBE consideration and possible C.B. amendment:**

For these issues, we welcome direction from Councilmembers at the September 29 COBE meeting. We will then develop specific potential amendments to the C.B. for review by Councilmembers and possible vote at a later COBE meeting.

- a. For a mid-block corridor that is built to earn extra floor area in Little Saigon under incentive zoning, is it sufficient that the corridor may be open to the public only 10 hours per day?

The proposed zoning in Little Saigon would allow a development to exceed 85 feet in height, up to a maximum of 150 feet, if (i) the lot size is at least 40,000 s.f., (ii) all floor area above 65 or 85 feet (depending on the zone) is in residential use, (iii) the developer participates in the incentive zoning program, and (iv) the developer provides a mid-block corridor open space public amenity. The proposed zoning would require a corridor to be open to the public for a minimum of 10 hours per day.

A mid-block corridor would be particularly valuable in Little Saigon because many of the blocks are very long, and the corridor would constitute an additional pedestrian route in the neighborhood. A corridor would serve both as an open space for residents, other occupants of the development, and the public, and as a pedestrian route open to the public.

A question arises as to the appropriate hours that a mid-block corridor would be accessible to the public. Because it would be on private property, and might be located between two

towers of a residential development, the City could likely not require it to be open and accessible to the public 24/7.

What amount of public access to a corridor would be deemed adequate? Is that amount of public access sufficient to justify allowing a development up to 150 feet in height? If not, Councilmembers may want to consider whether that increased height should be an option at all in Little Saigon.

- b. Is there adequate flexibility in the C.B. to allow additional parking potentially to be built in Little Saigon?

Under *existing* zoning in Little Saigon (a mixture of NC3, C1, and IC), there is no cap on the amount of parking that can be built. The *proposed* downtown zoning (DMR/C and DMC) would impose a maximum amount of parking for non-residential uses of 1 parking space per 1000 s.f.

Throughout downtown, a developer can apply to DPD for a special exception to provide more than 1 space per 1000 s.f. of non-residential use. The Land Use Code lists the criteria that the DPD Director considers when reviewing an application. The South Downtown C.B. would add an additional factor to that list – “whether the area is located at the edge of the Downtown Urban Center where available short-term parking and transit service are limited.”

This code provision allowing additional parking by special exception, and the additional factor to be added by the South Downtown C.B., may provide adequate flexibility for future development in *most* of Little Saigon.

- c. Is there adequate flexibility in the C.B. to allow additional parking potentially to be built east of I-5 along S. Dearborn Street, including on the Goodwill Industries site?

As described above in issue 2.b, the proposed downtown zoning of DMC east of I-5 along S. Dearborn Street would impose a parking cap for non-residential uses of 1 space per 1000 s.f. Goodwill Industries and an adjacent property owner have requested the ability to build parking in excess of this cap in any redevelopment, particularly for retail uses.

These parcels along Dearborn are more auto-oriented than the rest of Little Saigon. They have good access to Rainier Avenue S., I-5, and I-90. The access to public transit is less than in other areas of downtown. Given the high auto accessibility, redevelopment in this area might reasonably be expected to include sizable retail uses.

DPD staff reviewed the amount of parking provided in recent years for office and mixed-use developments at other sites outside but near downtown, and found a range of about 1.4 to 2.2 spaces per 1000 s.f. When the Goodwill site was proposed to be redeveloped a couple of years ago, the overall project was to include 1.65 spaces per 1000 s.f., with the retail portion having about 2.0 spaces per 1000 s.f.

It may be reasonable to increase the amount of parking that could be provided in this area, particularly for retail uses, perhaps to between 1.5 and 2.0 spaces per 1000 s.f. A developer would also have the option to apply to DPD for a special exception to provide even more parking than this new code limit. Questions to consider include: Would a higher parking cap apply only to retail uses, or to other non-residential uses as well (e.g., office)? To how large a geographic area would a higher parking cap apply?

- d. Does the proposed zoning include appropriate thresholds for requiring sidewalks and pedestrian amenities in the IC zone south of S. Charles Street?

The area south of S. Charles Street (south of the Chinatown / International District) is currently zoned IG2. The proposed zoning is IC, reflecting a gradual transition of land uses from predominantly industrial to a wider mix of uses, including office. (However, the proposal would not change existing City policy that prohibits almost all residential uses in industrial zones.) Buildings taller than 85 feet would be allowed through incentive zoning.

The transition to a broader mix of uses, and the proximity to the Stadium Link light rail station, warrant a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The proposed requirements for sidewalks in the right-of-way, and pedestrian improvements on private property, would vary in this area under the proposed zoning.

Sidewalks: In general, any new construction of 4000 s.f. or more would trigger requirements in the right-of-way for sidewalks. New construction of less than 4000 s.f., or change of use in an existing structure, would not require new sidewalks.

Street frontage design standards: Any new construction of any size would be subject to street frontage design standards, with a higher standard for facades facing S. Charles Street or 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. DPD considers these two streets to be the focus of pedestrian activity in the area. This category includes standards for façade transparency, pedestrian entrances, structure width, façade height and setback, screening and location of parking, and more. A change of use in an existing structure would not have to meet these standards.

Street-level use requirements: At street level along S. Charles Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., specified pedestrian-oriented uses or automotive sales and service uses are required for at least 75% of each street-facing façade.

Additional mitigation through incentive zoning: More extensive pedestrian improvements could be required of projects taking advantage of incentive zoning. For such a project, DPD would make an individualized determination of impacts and could require additional mitigation as appropriate. Required improvements are identified in the proposed C.B. and might include pedestrian walkways, improvements to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. or Airport Way S., or street improvements to improve wayfinding to and from the Stadium Link light rail station.

The table below summarizes the situations in which the various types of improvements would be required.

Threshold of Development	Improvements Required			
	Sidewalks	Street Frontage Design Standards	Street-Level Use Requirements for 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue S. and S. Charles Street	Possible additional mitigation through incentive zoning
Change of use	No	No	Yes	No
Base development < 4000 s.f.	No	Yes	Yes	No
Base development ≥ 4000 s.f.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Incentive zoning development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### 3. Companion resolution

See the separate draft resolution for review.